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LOCAL NEWS

Council OKs Abilene Public Library's strategic plan



By *Brooke Crum* of the Abilene Reporter News

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The fate of the former Lincoln Middle School has yet to be decided.

But there is a possibility the Abilene Public Library could use the vacant building as its main branch if enough funding becomes available, likely through a public-private sector partnership, the City Council said Thursday when voted to adopt the library's

strategic plan.

If that does not occur in the next three to five years, the library may simply upgrade the main library on Cedar Street, said Lesli Andrews, the city's community services director.

The strategic plan, a requirement for the library to remain accredited by the state, recommends that over the next three to five years the Library Advisory Board either rehabilitate the main library or identify a location and funding source to replace it, Andrews said.

Councilman Shane Price pulled the item from the consent agenda because he said he wanted to be clear on the intent of the document. He said updating the main library and pursuing the use of Lincoln as a library "would be setting the library up for failure."

Andrews assured Price and the rest of the council that the plan represents a vision, not goals that must be met.

"This is just asking staff to look at the future of the main library and where it can go, but they're very much dreams," she said.

City Manager Robert Hanna said he would not ask the council to renovate the main library, then look at turning Lincoln into a library. He said the city could look into transforming Lincoln if enough private money becomes available, but the plan is just a vision of where the library wants to go.

"This is really vision-casting," said Councilman Anthony Williams, "allowing an opportunity for others in a strategic way to map out what the vision is."

Andrews said the benefit of the strategic plan is that it keeps the library accredited by the state, which gives it access to free

resources, including more than 60 research databases, and the ability to receive grant funding.

In other business, the council authorized Hanna to negotiate a contract with Speed Fab-Crete, a general contractor, to provide construction-manager-at-risk services for the building of fire station Nos. 3, 4 and 7. Construction-manager-at-risk services involve delivering the project within an agreed upon price based on the specifications.

Hanna said he believed he could negotiate a price of less than \$427,125, the dollar figure on the agenda.

Fire Chief Larry Bell said the company has built fire stations and municipal safety complexes in Forney, Hudson Oaks, Joshua, Rockwall, Lake Worth and Fate, to name a few cities. Speed Fab-Crete also prefers to use local contractors, Bell said.

Additionally, the panel approved an agreement with Iteris Inc. to evaluate and design traffic signal system upgrades at 64 locations. This is part of the \$45 million streets bond project.

Michael Rice, the city's public works director, said the main issue the city wants to improve in regard to the traffic signals is communication, which would, in turn, improve traffic flow. One signal will be added at the intersection of Industrial Boulevard and Maple Street.

The council also approved spending for another bond project — the Central Business District concrete street repairs project. Council members agreed to spend \$195,000 to have Enprotec/Hibbs & Todd design the repairs, which should take about a year.

Rice said the company expected construction to take about six

months.

The Central Business District is bordered by North Sixth Street on the north, Hickory Street on the west, North First Street on the south and Walnut Street on the east.

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